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DEVELOPMENTS IN INDO-CHINA

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DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

*(Information as of 1500)*

NORTH VIETNAM

An SA-3 site southwest of Hanoi is now operational.

SOUTH VIETNAM

Saigon plans to reduce the number of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong prisoners of war available for exchange by converting Communist prisoners to rallier status.

LAOS

The government operation to retake a key road junction near Sala Phou Khoun is under way, but Communist attacks have stymied planned moves on the city itself.

CAMBODIA

[REDACTED] A second effort is under way to relieve the beleaguered government garrison at Romeas, and the Khmer Communists are having problems keeping the people from fleeing insurgent-controlled areas.

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NORTH VIETNAM

Photography [ ] reveals the first operational SA-3 site in the country. The site, approximately eight miles southwest of Hanoi, contains eight missiles on four launchers together with the necessary radar and associated support equipment. At least 70 SA-3 missile canisters were spotted at the Dong Dang transshipment area near the Chinese border [ ]. Additional SA-3 sites will probably soon show up in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, improving North Vietnam's air defense capability against aircraft flying at low and medium altitudes. [ ]

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SOUTH VIETNAM

Saigon is moving to reduce the number of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong prisoners of war available for a post-cease-fire exchange. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] plans were laid in late 1972 to convert Communist prisoners to rallier status, thereby making them eligible for release in South Vietnam as citizens.

Three criteria were to be used for their selection: a certificate of good conduct from the prisoner's camp; acceptance of government indoctrination, presumably meaning that the prisoner at least agreed to attend some period of government sponsored training; and acknowledgement of responsibility for the prisoner by a parent or close relative in conjunction with sponsorship by a government military or civilian official.

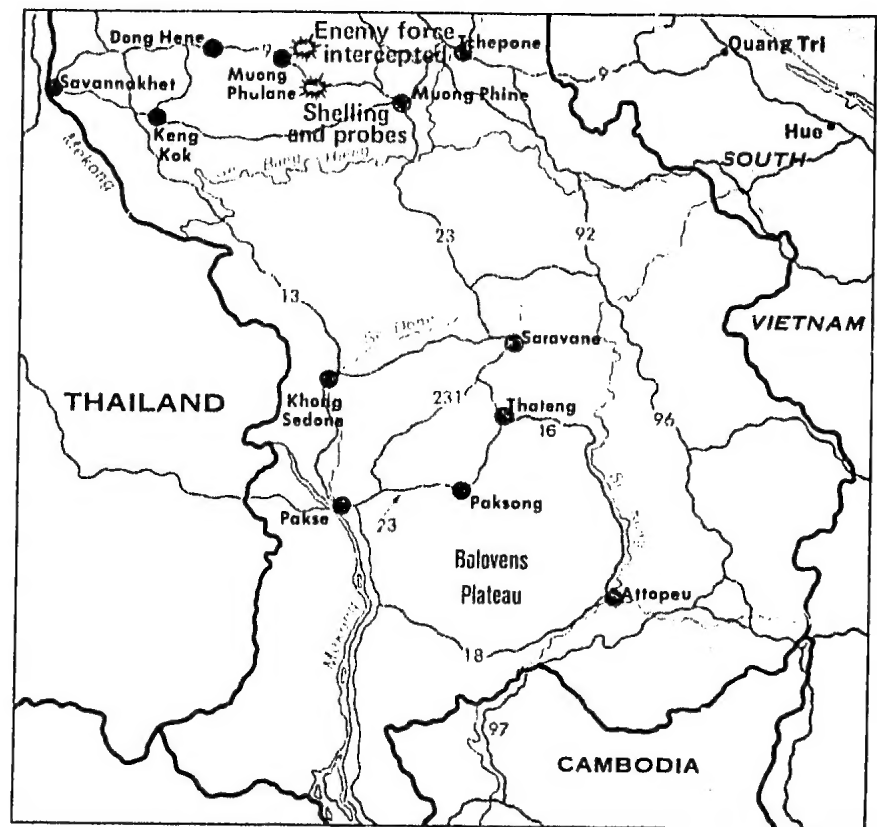
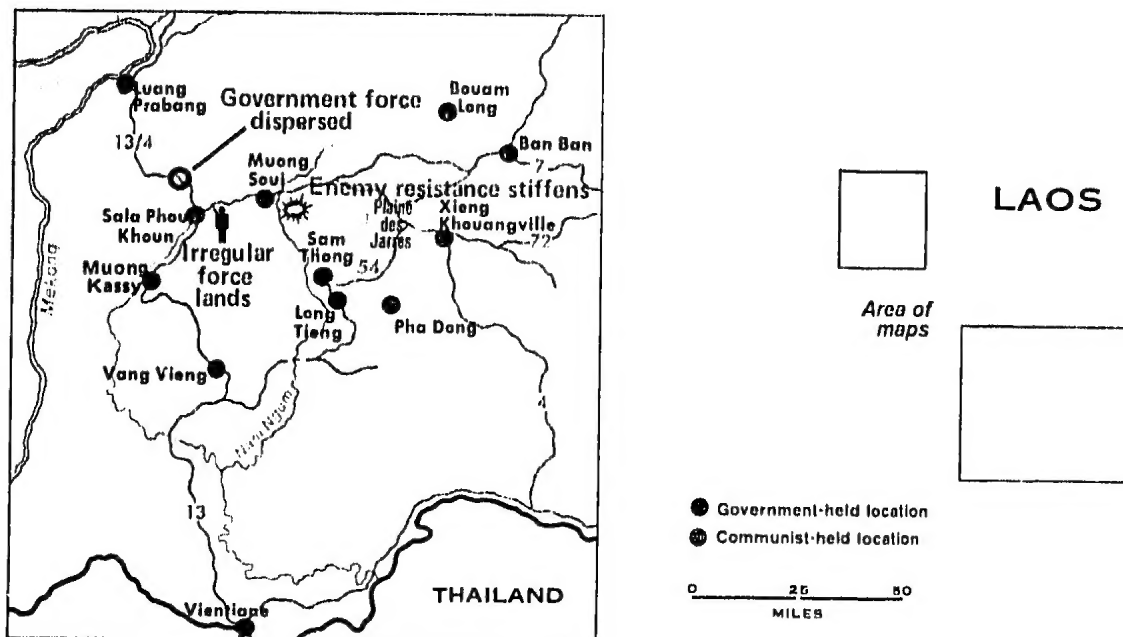
At first, only 1,000 individuals were to be transferred to rallier status. Orders were received in mid-December to delay the transfer of prisoners, but their processing continued. As of mid-January [REDACTED] 2,000 were ready to be released and an additional 2,700 were awaiting the completion of their processing.

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Some earlier reports had indicated that Saigon would refuse to hand over Communist troops with rallier status to the Viet Cong's National Liberation Front after a cease-fire, but this is the first indication that a systematic program to increase the number of ralliers has been implemented. The instigation of such a program after the passage of the original 31 October deadline suggests that Saigon has decided to provide itself with more flexibility to deal with the prisoner issue after the new settlement is signed. [REDACTED]

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LAOS

A second irregular force has landed south of Route 7 as the government operation to retake the Sala Phou Khoun road junction is under way. Helicopters ferried 1,500 irregulars into the hills some five miles southeast of Sala Phou Khoun on 20 January and the following day the irregulars began advancing north toward Route 7 against little opposition. Near Muong Soui, to the east, units of the 1000-man irregular force that landed in the area several days ago encountered stiff enemy resistance on 20 January as they moved down from the hills toward the Communist logistics base.

Along Route 13, Communist attacks have stymied planned moves on Sala Phou Khoun from the north and south. Artillery and ground attacks on 21 January dispersed a government force on Route 13 some eight miles northwest of the road junction, and harassing attacks over the weekend kept other government units stalled near Muong Kassy south of Sala Phou Khoun. [REDACTED]

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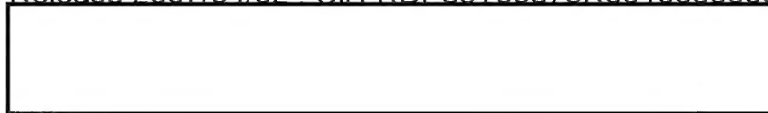
Another Battle Brews Near Muong Phalane

According to belated reports, government units on 19 January intercepted a North Vietnamese battalion moving on Muong Phalane from the northeast. The Communist troops, supported by artillery fire, attempted to push through irregular units some five miles northeast of the town, but were pushed back. A North Vietnamese soldier captured near Muong Phalane late last week claimed that elements from the newly formed North Vietnamese 49th Regiment had recently reinforced the 29th Regiment and that both regiments were participating in an offensive against Muong Phalane. Other enemy units probed and shelled irregular positions near Route 9 farther to the east. [REDACTED]

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A Khmer Communist Headache

[redacted] one of the Khmer Communists' major problems throughout Cambodia is the flight of people out of insurgent-controlled areas. [redacted]

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[redacted] an official of the Khmer Communist Central Committee reportedly said that this problem is particularly acute in Kompong Thom and Takeo provinces. To help remedy the situation, the official called for increasing food production through agricultural cooperatives and for more insurgent aid in cultivation, fishing, and animal husbandry. He said that every village should also form a farmers' association and have a village militia unit.

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In discussing relations between the insurgents and North Vietnamese Army troops, the official stated that friendly ties had to be maintained because the Khmer Communists need North Vietnamese support. He claimed that the North Vietnamese would never abandon the insurgents while Cambodian or South Vietnamese forces occupied any part of the country.

The Military Situation

A second air-mobile operation to relieve the beleaguered government garrison at Romeas northwest

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[REDACTED]

of Phnom Penh was launched on 19 January. Approximately 500 government troops were lifted by helicopter into positions northwest of the town, and at last report were making some progress against light enemy resistance. The main relief columns moving from the northeast and southeast remain stalled, however. The situation inside the encircled camp is critical as government casualties continue to mount.

In the south, government forces have made no progress in their effort to clear Route 2 between Phnom Penh and the provincial capital of Takeo. The squadron of armored personnel carriers, sent from Phnom Penh to reinforce the 2nd Paratroop Brigade stalled north of the town of Thnal Totung, has run into stiff enemy resistance, and is itself bogged down just to the north of the paratroops' positions. The enemy, meanwhile, continues to put heavy pressure on the government garrison at Thnal Totung.

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